

News Release



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Terry Goddard Criticizes Claims, Marketing of Alcoholic Energy Drinks

(Phoenix, Ariz. – Aug. 20, 2007) Attorney General Terry Goddard today called alcoholic energy drinks a serious health and safety risk for young people and asked a federal agency to investigate promotional claims.

Goddard wants the U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) to review advertising claims made by manufacturers and take appropriate enforcement action against companies that make misleading health-related statements about these drinks. Goddard joined 29 state Attorneys General in a letter to the agency.

"The nonalcoholic energy drinks constitute a rapidly growing segment of the beverage market," Goddard said. "These drinks are particularly popular with teens and young people. Unfortunately, alcoholic beverage manufacturers have capitalized on the appeal of these drinks to promote pre-mixed alcoholic energy drinks to young people."

The alcoholic energy drinks contain caffeine and other additives typically found in nonalcoholic products. Some advertising implies that the additives will enable consumers to drink more without becoming impaired or intoxicated.

"The ads suggest that these drinks will increase a person's stamina or energy level, but they don't mention the potentially severe, adverse consequences of mixing caffeine and other stimulants and alcohol," Goddard said.

Goddard's concerns are shared by Arizona Department of Liquor Licenses and Control Director Jerry Oliver, who recently met with liquor industry leaders about responsible retail display and proper training in the sale of these drinks. During that meeting, Oliver said they indicated they will support and work with Goddard and Oliver in their concerns with alcoholic energy drinks.

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"I'm encouraged by the industry's willingness to address our concerns," Oliver said. "I'm especially disturbed about the similarity in packaging of the alcoholic products, compared to the nonalcoholic products, and their close placement in stores."

The products are categorized as malt beverages even though many contain a significantly higher percentage of alcohol than beer. This classification allows them to be sold at more places and at lower prices than distilled spirits.

In addition to the points raised in the Attorneys General letter to the TTB, Goddard and Oliver called on the distributors and retailers to:

- Review the proximity in stores of nonalcoholic high energy drinks with alcoholic energy drinks so customers will not mistakenly buy a beverage containing alcohol.
- Review training procedures for store clerks. Because the products are packaged similarly, clerks may be unaware they are selling an alcoholic beverage.
- Provide clear labeling on the shelves indicating whether the drink contains alcohol.
- Conduct an educational campaign to educate parents, teens, and young people about the health and safety risks of the drinks.
- To the extent possible, program cash registers so clerks are required to ask for proof of age before selling an alcoholic high energy drink.

"These are reasonable steps that can help reduce underage drinking in Arizona," Goddard said.

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